

Why Diablo is Done

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Every few weeks, one can count on seeing [another editorial or letter to the editor](#) in the local media – in SLO, San Francisco, Sacramento and points between – urging that the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant stay open.

Without opining on the various energy replacement strategies and schedules recently ordered by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility reiterates that extending the life of the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant is not an option.

The CPUC has known these megawatts were going to be phased out since retirement was proposed in 2016, affirmed by their decision in 2018. That a replacement procurement order has appeared this late—and only upon entering a second summer of energy uncertainty—represents cascading inactions on the part of the gubernatorial appointees who lead that agency, not to mention the California Energy Commission and the California Independent System Operator. Regardless of replacement scenarios, the following holds true: Diablo Canyon cannot be resurrected beyond the NRC license expiration dates in 2024 and 2025.

First, PG&E has made it quite clear that they have no interest in operating the facility beyond those dates. No third party has made a “bid” for the facility, nor would any who consulted with competent engineers and accountants.

Second, in April 2018 (per the U.S. Federal Register), “*PG&E requested withdrawal of its license renewal application, including all associated correspondence and commitments, for DCP, Unit Nos. 1 and 2.*” Any subsequent attempt at NRC relicensing will require an entirely new environmental analysis, permitting procedures, CPUC approval of renewal funding, and

would likely be subject to years of contentious adjudicatory hearings, with no guaranteed outcome.

Third, there is no guarantee of “steady baseload power” from a 40-year-old nuclear power plant. Unit 2’s failed main generator was replaced for nearly \$100 million in 2019, but failed again in 2020, working only 30% of that year and narrowly squeaking by during the peak load energy crunches. The complex and costly repairs of aging systems are likely to multiply in the ensuing years.

Fourth, Diablo is too expensive, with \$1.25 billion in annual above-market costs estimated by PG&E for 2020. Over a decade (minus inflation), that’s \$12.5 billion – or 62.5% of PG&E’s proposal to underground distribution lines over the next 10 years. Combined with purchases of renewable energy and storage, are there not better values for California’s energy customers?

And finally, nothing tells you the nuclear power era in California is coming to an end like a decision by the CPUC hastening that end. That decision was handed down on August 12, when the Commission rejected PG&E’s 7-year timeline for the transfer of all nuclear waste from Diablo’s spent fuel pools into dry cask storage and affirmed that the transfer must be completed within four years of shutdown. That confirmation came after exhaustive testimony and cross-examination by the A4NR establishing that the faster timeline is not only \$300 million cheaper, but safer. As an extra benefit, the physical decommissioning of the reactor units can begin earlier, hastening the eventual restoration of the site.

After the August 12 decision, A4NR executive director Rochelle Becker commented “Our attention and oversight now turn to the California Energy Commission as they become our eyes and ears in evaluating these proposals and bids for the expedited transfer of the spent nuclear fuel.”

While there is still much planning and evaluation needed to secure California’s emissions-free electricity future, nuclear power from Diablo Canyon will not be in that mix.

We need to speak now for the Diablo Canyon Lands!

From the Santa Lucia Chapter

The decommissioning of the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant is a few years away, but the decisions that will decide the fate of the stunning 12,000 acres of undeveloped coastal lands around it are being made now.

Whether this incredible 14-mile stretch of California’s coast, now owned by PG&E, will remain off-limits to the public forever and its critical habitat lost to development after the plant closes depends on us. The California Public Utilities Commission, PG&E, state agencies, and our state senator need to hear from us now, loud and clear, about what we want to see happen to these lands.

That’s why more than two dozen local, state, and national environmental organizations and recreational groups have drafted a conservation framework for the Diablo Canyon Lands and

submitted it to PG&E as part of the plant's decommissioning process. ([Read the Conservation Framework here.](#))

In a nutshell: Prior to their transfer to any future owner, conservation easements must be attached to these lands to ensure the protection of the unique ecological, scenic and cultural resources found there. Click [here](#) to send a message to our state senator, John Laird, about the desire to protect the Diablo Canyon Lands through conservation easements.

Here's a sample message:

I am writing to ask you to support the creation of conservation easements for the Diablo Canyon Lands by PG&E prior to closure of the power plant. This priceless stretch of our coast must have the guaranteed protection of natural resources and public access that only a conservation easement can provide in perpetuity. Please support the Conservation Framework prepared by the Friends of the Diablo Canyon Lands and ensure that its recommendations are implemented for the benefit of people and wildlife for generations to come.